

TRANSCRIPT

Pack Memorial Library Slide Show Tour, 1978

Date: 1978

Length: 1 audiocassette (side A, 00:05:50; side B, 00:21:14)

Abstract: Audio recorded to accompany a slideshow of Pack Memorial Library and financial statistics on Asheville-Buncombe Library System expenditures ending with the year 1978. The speaker describes library services, followed by statistics indicating declining library expenditures despite rising costs of books, to advocate for increased investment in the library system.

One of the real problems of trying to describe the services of the modern public library is the impossibility of ever quite covering the subject.

The array of materials and services the library provides and all the kinds of needs that people bring to it combine in an almost endless variety of uses.

With that in mind, we have chosen to concentrate in this visual report on some of the Asheville-Buncombe Library System's distinctively practical services to the community.

But first, a brief look at the whole.

The public library system reaches people through the new central library downtown and 10 branch and community outlets, including the bookmobile.

The central library has of course the largest collections and most extensive services, and also provides fundamental support to the branches.

The branches in turn extend service to many additional people, and of increasing importance help also to save gas.

And the bookmobile, rickety but still going, takes service to the very edges of the county and to persons who might otherwise have no service at all.

The library serves children from toddler age on up, grownups of countless variety, and is a major service in the lives of many older people. It works to make library use a family affair.

Because people today need a wide choice of hours, it provides the choice.

It is sometimes crowded and sometimes very close and personal.

It's a place where kids can have fun together, explore with their parents, or on their own, or find a change of pace from the TV set.

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These seven informational books have been borrowed 213 times. The new national electrical code you see there has already gone out more than 10 times.

These books on solar and wood heating circulated 79 times during the summer and fall and became virtually unobtainable with the beginning of cold weather.

The automobile shop manuals and repair guides tell their own circulation story through the soiled covers and grease marked pages.

This well-known book illustrates the close relation between popular concerns and the use of the collection. The circulation card shows that it moved steadily in 1974 and '75, came to a standstill in '76, and went back to full throttle in '78 and '79. The author now has a revision called *New Profits from the Monetary Crisis*.

The career collection in the central library has been one of the best to be found anywhere.

These career guides, test reviews, job handbooks, and resume guides, the North Carolina job service listings on microfiche, and the college and university catalogs on fiche are but a small sample of the whole collection.

But much of it needs updating, which requires both money and staff time to accomplish.

This large print book is shown with a clipping of ordinary type for comparison.

The library system has hundreds of titles in this format, plus large print editions of the *New York Times* and *Reader's Digest*.

Although more expensive than regular books, their introduction several years ago made reading available again to many persons who had no longer been able to read at all.

[END OF SIDE A, 00:05:50.]

[Speaker repeats the same script on Side B, then continues as below.]

This video enlarger takes service still further, this time to persons with only marginal sight. Its extreme enlarging power allows the nearly blind to read, sign checks, and accomplish other minimal tasks. It's also useful for examining any kind of fine detail.

The library's sound cassettes reflect another, newer development. Cassettes have proven to have great appeal to people of all ages, and the expanding choice of content, such as you see here, makes it more and more difficult to keep a sufficient supply on the racks.

The library's microfilm collections, the *New York Times* on microfilm, *Asheville Citizen-Times*, and others have long been a basic information resource.

Now, microfiche has come into its own, mainly because of the easy to forge and keeping information updated.

These telephone books on microfiche, for example, have made this service manageable for the first time. The Yellow Pages, incidentally, along with Thomas Register and Sweet's catalog, are particularly useful for quick supplier and product searches.

Moody's, Standard and Poor's, and Dunn and Bradstreet are keystone names of every brokerage and financial house, and also with the public library's financial and business services.

This Energy Bulletin service and these publications of the Conference Board illustrate the selectivity that must apply to specialized business publications. Because of their high cost, totaling, in this case a fairly typical \$800, they must earn their keep by regular use. These did not and have been replaced by others in greater demand.

Other useful publications become without any charge because of the library's special status. Here are a few of those it receives as regional depository for the Small Business Administration, US Census and Appalachian Regional Commission.

The map files contain, among numerous items, the US Geological Survey quadrangle, covering most of North Carolina. They are used by developers, surveyors, and others who need relatively detailed maps over wide areas.

When you see an old-time photograph in the *Citizen-Times*, or in local TV, or in any of the various ads that featured old Asheville pictures, the chances are that it came from these files.

Here an Akzona staff member looks for suitable pictures to copy for the new headquarters building.

As local booking agent for the State Library Film Service, the library supplies information and educational films from the best collection in North Carolina to schools, businesses, a great variety of other groups and organizations, and for its own programs. It is time consuming but highly worthwhile. The total viewing audience for these films runs around 60,000 a year.

The meeting rooms and auditorium have housed activities in recent months, as diverse as a babysitting workshop for youngsters, a multipart seminar on shade trees, and shown here, one of our series on dealing with income and estate taxes.

And by groups as varied as the US Forest Service, Junior Achievement, high school quiz bowl teams and county medical auxiliary.

Pack is the only larger library open without restriction to every resident, adult or child, student or otherwise in Buncombe County.

Its information collections and tollfree telephone link with the State Library provide indispensable support for those working on advanced projects.

The central library and branches also provide a good place to study for students doing homework at night, on Sunday afternoon, or whenever.

For students getting help from their parents, one of the more common sites, in fact, and for adults such as this man who happens to be preparing a book for publication.

The children's service, in addition to carrying on its own programs and reading guidance work, supports other efforts to serve children.

It is a resource center for preschool agencies throughout the county, supplying, for example, these filmstrip cassette kits with viewer players when needed.

It provides special instruction such as storytelling training for personnel in need of specific skills, strong collections for students and children's literature courses, and general guidance and advisory help as a matter of course.

It excels as a setting for parents wishing to encourage and guide their own children, lends special kits for children going to the hospital, and kits for families taking trips.

It delivers a direct dollars savings to many parents. These seven books a one to two week supply of bedtime reading for the typical small child, would have cost the parent \$36.50 to buy.

These educational games and puzzles were acquired primarily with low-income families in mind, but their appeal turned out to be much broader. An upper income mother recently voiced her appreciation by saying that she could not possibly afford the same quality and variety from her own budget.

The branch collections concentrate on more popular everyday interests without being superficial. These books on personal improvement, most fairly new, have circulated an average of 31 times each.

The 21 books in this popular series have gone out more than 500 times.

This excellent series on wild animals has the remarkable ability to satisfy both the beginner and the well-informed student. Typifying many parts of the collection, they are staple movers year in and year out.

And whether the attraction is practical, ancestral, or whatever, it is a fact that these three books have moved exceptionally well at 61 circulations. They are about moonshining, and the one you can't see carries the title *The Second Oldest Profession*.

Here is a person among several who saves up to \$55 a year in subscription costs, depending on his tax bracket, by checking the *Wall Street Journal* daily at a branch.

This reader is using the *Consumer Reports* product rating guide as she checks the catalog of a local retail store.

Here is a sampling that deals with the very essence of human concerns: with divorce, widowhood, remarriage, raising children and getting along with them, entering retirement. Most have gone out some 30 times or more.

Although the examples could go on almost indefinitely, a part of this reported budget time is concerned [with] the financial facts of service. This recent ad in the *National Journal* makes the point that the money required to buy the stack of books on the left would have bought the one on the right ten years ago, and notes that the average new book rose in that period, from \$8.47 to \$20.10.

How has that rise affected our own library situation? The red line on this chart traces the change in book cost from year to year; the brown line what we have spent for books, both using 1969 as the base year of 100. We can see that the cost of books has climbed sharply to a level of 229 in 1978, the last figure we have, while our expenditure for books increased to a level of 128, averaging annual cost rises of 13% versus 3% in expenditures.

Adding the blue line representing books added to our collections, shows the inevitable result: a decrease from the base year 100 to about 71 last year, amounting to a literal decline from the 18 to 22,000 volumes in those earlier years to less than 14,000 currently.

We can make a similar comparison for staff salaries, which are the other primary component of service. The red line on this graph traces the consumer price index for the South, and the brown line, the total salaries of those staff members occupying the same position since 1972, the earliest base year available for this comparison. Over that period, the CPI rose by 77% and the staff salaries by 52%.

Adding a blue line to show salaries adjusted for the CPI, we find that the purchasing power of these salaries is some 14% less than in 1972, and even less than that if we count the income and Social Security taxes imposed. It is also a fact that these salaries have lagged behind the individual and family income growth here in Buncombe County, as indicated in current estimates.

This last graph compares our system with that group of libraries in North Carolina having comparable responsibilities for operating branches and extensive information reference services.

Reading from left to right, it is obvious that we are well below average in our local support in what we spend for staff, and what we spend for books.

We are above average in the number of books lent and in the number lent for each staff member we have. In fact, no other library equaled this figure.

As might be expected from these facts, the far right column shows a much below average expenditure per volume lent.

The large discrepancies reflected in such figures indicate a very serious situation. When this group of libraries spend as much for staff as we do for our entire operation, which is the case here, it is clearly more a matter of undernourishment than of any efficiencies with which we may be credited.

The danger lurking in the figures and trends depicted here is not that the library will be destroyed. The real danger is in the quiet but deadly leaching away of quality that eventually leaves a devitalized service with little of the value portrayed here.

In a society where knowledge will continue to be both a leading product and a prime mover, a community simply can't afford to let this happen.

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[END OF SIDE B, 00:21:14.]